

THE Christian Messenger.

NO. 24.

PHILADELPHIA, SATURDAY, JANUARY 15, 1820.

VOL. I.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you—JOHN xiii. 34.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

“Slave to no party, bigot to no sect.”

(Concluded from last Number.)

R. C. again: “In the sense that God is the author of any thing, in that sense, that thing is not sin.” Here permit us to remark, that the whole of T.’s objection, and this of R. C.’s, go to prove what we had before stated, “they meant it unto evil, yet God meant it unto good,” and in the language of Pope, “all discord, harmony not understood.” If our readers are not satisfied with this, we refer them to the writings of Dr. Hartley on the *theocratical or philosophical* and popular language of Scripture, or to Kneeland’s Review, for sale at the office of the Messenger. We are aware how awful it sounds to the ears of some to call God the author of sin: to evade this, how contradictory the poet writes,

“And binding nature fast in fate,
Left free the human will.”

We believe man to be a machine, formed like clay in the hands of the potter. We feel grateful to R. C. and T. for the candid manner in which they have treated “predestination.” Our ideas may be incorrect, and the being that unfolds truth, is deserving of the highest esteem: we claim no originality, the wisest of men said there was nothing new under the sun. Able and distinguished men have been pioneers in the cause of religion, but each cut but a single path, and Z. took the liberty of presenting several, as leading to the same grand centre. To two authors, and to them only, are we indebted: we did not at first mention their names, because they would have been the death warrant to their opinions. One, the much injured Priestley, has so often driven to their caverns the host of creed makers, that his name still makes them startle; the other, Ballou, one of the few who have not

continued to bow the knee to Baal. To the latter, in his *Treatise on Atonement*, Z. is indebted for a disappointment; we sought for “a sacrifice to vengeance,” but we found it not; we found “reconciliation.” Recommending the writings of the above, to those who are only accountable to their Maker for their conscience—we close.

Z.

Remark.—We have been aware from the first, which also seems to have been the opinion of T. that Z. meant nothing more than what can be clearly deduced from Scripture and reason; but being perhaps not much accustomed to writing on metaphysical subjects, his language, like the language of many others, as we conceive, has not been sufficiently guarded; and although he may have very rational and consistent views in his own mind, yet it is very possible that without the explanation which has been given, the reader might not have received the same views of the subject, as those which he meant to communicate.

As Z. has acknowledged the writings of the Rev. Mr. Ballou, we will here give his own words on this very subject; to which we do not object. “God saw fit, in his plan of divine wisdom, to make the creature subject to vanity; to give him a mortal constitution; to fix on his nature those faculties which would, in their operation, oppose the spirit of the heavenly nature. It is therefore said, that *God put enmity* between the seed of the woman, and that of the serpent. And it was by the passions which arose from the fleshy nature, that the whole mind became carnal, and man became captivated thereby. But perhaps the objector will say this denies the *liberty of the will*, and makes *God the author of sin*. To which I reply, desiring the reader to recollect what I have said of sin in showing its nature; (i.e. that it is limit-

ed and finite;) by which it is discovered, that *God may be the innocent and holy cause of that, which, in a limited sense, is sin*; but as it respects the meaning of God, it is intended for good.

“The reader will then ask, if God must be considered as the first, the holy, and the innocent cause of sin, is there any unholy or impure causes? I answer, there is, but in a limited sense. There is no divine holiness in any fleshly or carnal exercise; there is no holiness nor purity in all the deceptions ever experienced in imperfect beings; and these are the immediate causes of sin; and as such, they make the best of men on earth groan, and cry out, ‘Who shall deliver me from the body of this death!’” See Ballou on Atonement.

It has already been observed, page 72, that *if sin were a positive principle, as well as holiness, it would require a positive source; and one could be traced to God as well as the other*: but we may add here, if sin be a negative, and not a positive principle, we shall find that, in the moral world, sin has the same relation to holiness, hatred to love, folly to wisdom, &c. as, in the natural world, darkness has to light, or cold to heat. Now we can realize at once, that darkness is nothing more than the absence, or a less degree of light; so cold is nothing more than a less degree of heat; for it can be demonstrated that there is some degree of heat even in ice! so there is some degree of wisdom even in folly! but it is the weakness of the wisdom which gives it the name, folly.

Here we are willing to take leave of this subject, for the present; believing that whatever may be said, but little more light will be flung upon it: and choosing rather to strive to be delivered from sin and all its consequences.

E.D.

Extracts from the Proceedings of the General Convention of Universalists of the New England States and others, convened by Divine Permission, at Lebanon, (N. H.) on Thursday Evening, the 14th of September, A. D. 1819.

THE Committee on applications for ordination and fellowship, reported, that Ordination be conferred on BRS. Royal Gage and Robert L. Killam, and letters of fellowship granted to Charles Hudson. *Accepted.*

The committee on the subject of a History of Universalism, reported progress, and asked leave for further opportunity to finish the work.

The Committee on the subject of a Seminary of Science, made a report of their proceedings: That they had succeeded in establishing a Seminary in the town of *Dudley*, (Mass.)

Upon which the Convention

Voted, That this convention receive the NICHOLS ACADEMY under their patronage, and pledge themselves, in their social and individual capacities, to use all proper and reasonable means for the support, respectability, and permanence of said institution—*Provided*, That the Trustees are members of this Convention, and all vacancies shall be filled by members of the Convention, or those in fellowship therewith.

Voted, That Br. H. Ballou prepare and forward subscription papers to all the societies in this connexion, to obtain subscriptions for the support of the NICHOLS ACADEMY.

Adjourned this Convention to meet again by divine permission, at CLAREMONT, (N. H.) on the third *Wednesday* and *Thursday* in September, eighteen hundred and twenty.

General Epistle for A. D. 1819.

The Ministers and Delegates composing the General Convention of Universalists, to their Brethren of the same glorious Faith, and all sincere Christians to whom this salutation may come; grace, mercy and peace be multiplied unto you, from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself by reason of our sins, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people, peculiarly zealous of good works: to whom be praise and glory, for ever and ever.—Amen.

BRETHREN—We have abundant reason for rejoicing, thanksgiving and praise, that the King of kings and Lord of lords hath granted us another anniversary of our general convocation; blessing us with all spiritual benedictions in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him, that we should be pious and blameless before him in love; having thereby predisposed us to the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of his will, making us acceptable in the Beloved; through whom also, we have redemption, even the forgiveness of our sins, together with revelation of the *secrecy* of his will, which he hath purposed in himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together all things in Christ.

Divinely glorious was the occasion on which we assembled in annual Council, witnessing the increase and prosperity of the doctrine of Christ, in various sections of New England.—The Epistles from several societies and churches, and other intelligence which we received, announced the measurable fulfilment of a divine saying—many shall run to and fro, and knowledge be increased in the earth. In the multiplication of converts to the knowledge of the Truth, there is a proportionable diminution of uncharitableness and contention. The real disciples of the Lord Jesus, evince their acquisitions in the science of sanctity, by an exhibition of love and beneficence, and happily for us, in this acceptance of the word, the Saviour of sinners was a teacher of vital and practical godliness. Reformations, under the instructions of those who pursue his system of education, would be highly auspicious to the welfare of man both in the present and coming world. Conversions of this description, equally distant from the extremes of right practical goldness and indifference on the one hand, and blazing professional enthusiasm on the other, have attended the administration of the word of life and salvation, during the recess of the convention. The spirit of harmony, brotherly love, and charity seems to pervade our religious commonwealth, in all its connexions and dependencies. A tenacious and bigotted attachment to abstruse and metaphysical points in theology; to ambiguous sayings and insoluble problems, which constitute

subjects for contention and strife, among different Associations of professors, disturbed not the harmony of our deliberations, investigations, and resolutions in council. The timely admonition of St. Paul, that those who swerve from the *end and object of the law*, which is, *charity* out of pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned, are turned to its opposite, vain jangling and endless genealogies, which minister and involve *questions* to the injury, and not *answers* to the edifying of the brotherhood, induced us to the exercise of that catholicism, which is alone compatible with universal benevolence. With the chordage of our hearts thus attuned by the finger of Emmanuel, we celebrated the declarative praise and glory of Him, at whose presence the mountains trembled, and the deep uttered his voice, lifting up his hands on high.

The Committees appointed last session to visit the several Associations, brought very refreshing and animating tidings, as far as returns were made. The doctrine of life and immortality, through a crucified, risen and exalted Redeemer, to all the families, nations, and kindreds of the earth, is spreading and becoming acceptable to the reasoning and enquiring part of community in Vermont. That all intelligences capable of saying Blessing and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever, should be finally reconciled and devoted to that extatic and blissful employment, is found to be consonant with reason, revelation, and that benevolent image of the Deity, in all our bosoms, inciting us to pray and hope for the same. Well may it be said, The wilderness and solitary place is glad for Zion, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose.

Information was received by a young Brother,* ministering in Maine, of the wonderful success and extension of the doctrine of the Prince of peace, in that section of his heritage. Several new societies of respectability, both for numbers and character, have recently been formed, and many others are organizing which solicit the labours of more ministering brethren. Could additional assistance be granted to that

* Br. B. Streeter.

section, and the character and religion of Jesus be announced and defended by an adequate number of faithful servants in the truth, highly promising and auspicious would be the consequences. Convinced that, as a denomination, we have not *heaped* to ourselves teachers, having itching ears, but are destitute of a sufficient number to supply the regularly organized societies in our connexion, without having any to send on heathen missions, it becomes us to implore the Lord of the harvest, that he would raise up, qualify, and send forth, faithful and skilful labourers, into his vineyard.

From Connecticut, a favourable communication was received, through the medium of a Brother,* now labouring in that region. Notwithstanding the systematic opposition to the *will* of God that *all men should be saved* and come to the knowledge of the *truth*, by the clergy of that state, still that Truth, (which must of consequence be consistent with the salvation of all men,) prevails to a considerable degree. A door for evangelical usefulness is opened in several populous and wealthy towns, and the Macedonian cry reiterated, Come over and help us. The exertions of our young friend and brother, whose situation is that of a *lamb* among *wolves*, having been crowned with unexpected success, renders the prospect promising to others, who shall make a trial in that quarter.

Several new Societies have been organized during the last year in Massachusetts, which need an Apollos to water and nourish them with that doctrine that falls like rain and distils like dew; like the small rain on the tender herb, or the gentle dew where no rain falleth. Boston, Charlestown, Salem, Shirley, and other towns are favoured with the labours of able Ministers of the New Testament, whose feet are beautiful on the mountain of Zion, as they proclaim the gospel of peace.— Similar remarks may be made in relation to some of the most populous towns in New Hampshire, where the equality of the government, and the habitual liberality of the people, render the future prospects highly grateful to the truth. Societies in Washington, Hillsborough, Henneker, Warner, Sutton, Goffstown, Weare, and

other adjacent towns, present their reiterated solicitations to the Convention, for some faithful and worthy preachers to come among them. Indeed to insert a catalogue of the societies destitute of preaching, would render this letter prolix and tedious. May the Lord cast a propitious eye on his famishing flock, lead them into the green pastures of his grace, and afford them assistance by day, and protection by night.

(To be Continued.)

Christian Messenger.

Philadelphia, Saturday, Jan. 15, 1820.

CONTROVERSIAL.

R. C. by way of answer to some observations of T. on John xvii. 5, in Christian Messenger, p. 71, has quoted Eph. i. 3, 4, viz. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.* He remarks, that "this seems to be proof positive that the chosen of the Lord (more or less) all existed in Christ before the foundation of the world, in the same sense that Christ existed; for how could the apostle himself be chosen in Christ, unless the apostle existed as well as Christ? And that he did so in the sense that the dead are alive unto God, (*for all live unto him,*) we are not disposed to dispute."

T. may be permitted to say, that, in page 21, there is no reply to his request respecting Gen. iii. 22. which R. C. appears to think somewhat difficult, from his evading the question, and that there is no farther light found in Kneeland's Lectures, p. 133—140.

I agree with R. C. though I do not know what he meant by the words (more or less) that what he has quoted is proof positive that the chosen of the Lord existed in Christ, before the foundation of the world, in the same sense in which Christ existed. And I believe his declaration in page 72, that "this does not prove to *his understanding*, that either of them existed in a conscious state at that time." But I have not pretended, neither would I

willingly undertake to prove, that R. C. ever had any right understanding of the *Scripture account* of the pre-existence either of Christ or of mankind. When I find a serious man endeavouring to support a hypothesis opposite to what I believe the Scripture teaches, I may question the correctness of his understanding, without impeaching his piety, sincerity, or moral conduct, although my own understanding is far from being infallible.

The reason why I so readily agree with R. C. that his quotation of Eph. i. 3, 4, is *proof positive* of pre-existence, is, because it is one of many passages of Scripture, which, to my mind, appear clearly to indicate that mankind had been created and existed in Christ before the world began, in a state of spiritual holiness and angelic purity; from which they fell by disobedience, as individuals, in various ways and degrees. Hence the various tempers, dispositions, and propensities, which they bring into the world with them; the result of former habits, which show themselves as the powers of the individuals come to be developed. As to the notion that the human mind, when it comes into the world, being like a clean sheet of paper, without any bias to good or evil, until it receives the impression of example, it is totally destitute of any evidence of its truth, unsupported by Scripture, and the facts of real life, which rather appear to indicate that there are in the minds of infants some capacities and dispositions to good, and some capacities and dispositions to evil, which latter generally preponderate; and even the very best, by the time they arrive at manhood, have many items of misconduct to regret, much to repent of.

Many things in the Scripture phraseology seem to imply that mankind had fallen from their original purity—in their falling, and before they had fallen asleep. A few out of very many instances may be mentioned.

Grace was given to them in Christ before the world began, 2 Tim. i. 9. and God, who cannot lie, promised to give unto them eternal life before the world began. Tit. i. 2.

The Lord was their dwelling-place and their God, before the mountains were brought forth, before he had formed the earth and the world, Psalm xc. 1, 2. They were turned to destruc-

* Hosea Ballou 2d.

tion, became as asleep, and were carried away as with a flood, (probably that very state of water and darkness which Moses describes as covering the earth, Gen. xii.) in order that they might return, *Beni Adam*, sons of Adam. It is somewhat remarkable that the first benediction to Adam, be fruitful and multiply, and *replenish the earth*, Gen. i. 28. was precisely the same as was given to Noah, Gen. ix. 1. after the destruction of its former inhabitants. Corresponding with this is Ecl. ii. 7. 29. *God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.* The last clause shows that the term *man*, relates to the whole class, and is not peculiar to Adam; and the *inventions* being contrasted with the *uprightness* of moral agents, shows them to be sinful.

We read of men being *reconciled* to God, but the very idea of reconciliation implies a previous state of love and friendship with God, which did not exist during their present lives till they were reconciled.

Redemption from sin, necessarily implies a restoration to freedom from sin, which they never possessed during this present life, till they were redeemed.

Men are represented as having gone astray like sheep; but sheep cannot go astray unless they have first been in the right pasture; and when they *return* to the shepherd and bishop of their souls, it is in that state of spiritual mindedness which they never possessed in this life until they returned.

Men are said to be *alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them.* Men cannot be alienated from what they never before possessed, but they are born ignorant of God and Christ. Their alienation, therefore, must have taken place in a former state, when they had enjoyed the life of God, and they must be restored to that life of God, through the knowledge of the Father, *the only true God*, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. *They had their understanding darkened;* which implies a previous state of light, which did not exist in them in the present state. Thus they wander, weary and heavy laden, until they embrace the invitation of Christ, *they come to him*, and he gives them *anawen, rest again* to their souls.

If R. C. can and will give a rational

and satisfactory solution of these things without the idea of pre-existence, he will do what I cannot do, and it will be better than all his sneers in the lectures, pages 57 and 58. T.

Remark.—As T. has identified R. C. with Mr. Kneeland, we have no objection, being well satisfied with what has been written by either. We were mistaken, it seems, in thinking that what was stated on page 21, in answer to J. J. would have been satisfactory to T., that is, so far as it relates to the present controversy. We can only add,

1. That the Hebrew noun *Alehim*, which we render God, although it has a plural termination, does not convey plurality of idea, (i. e. when applied to God,) must be obvious from its being invariably rendered *God*, and not *gods*, by the LXX; that is, in the singular, and not in the plural number.

2. If the noun does not necessarily convey plurality of idea, then the pronoun *us*, alluding to the same being, does not necessarily convey plurality of idea; it is a mode of expression often used without plurality of idea, and gives dignity to the style. "*As one of us*," therefore, Gen. iii. 22. can mean nothing more than *one like unto us*, (i. e. like unto us in the particular there named; for no one can suppose that man had become like unto God in every sense,) hence the *us*, as we conceive, means no other than the *Alehim*, that is, no other than God himself.

3. If *us*, when applied to God, necessarily conveys plurality of idea, then, suppose ever so many included, there is no certainty that he who was called *Jesus of Nazareth*, was one of the number. We are not disposed to add any thing further on this subject.

We are happy in coming at an agreement at last, in words, if not in idea, "*that the chosen of the Lord (more or less,*" by which we allude to the different opinions of men on this subject, as some think but *few*, others *many*, others *all*, were chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world,) "*all existed in Christ before the foundation of the world, IN THE SAME SENSE THAT CHRIST EXISTED!*" Having admitted this, we shall make no remark on the arguments of T. brought in support of his views on the subject, as we are willing that his arguments in this particular should have their full weight with our readers. Considering also, that

his ideas are perfectly harmless, and not perceiving that they can have any influence, *pro or con*, on our moral conduct, we shall not dispute them; but will only say, we have no knowledge of *our* pre-existence, and therefore conclude, that if Christ had any knowledge of *his*, it must have been by *revelation*, and not by *recollection*!

We can give no other solution of the passages of Scripture which seem to imply the idea of the pre-existence of Christ, or of our existence in him "*before the foundation of the world,*" than to suppose that those things were so in the purpose of God, "*who calleth those things which be not as though they were.*" Rom. iv. 17. For God said to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 5. "*A father of many nations have I made thee,*" even before Abraham was the father of any one except *Ishmael*. If, therefore, it can be truly said that *God calleth those things which be not as though they were*, merely because he had purposed them so to be, it gives a complete solution of every difficulty on this subject; and whether it will be satisfactory to our much respected friend T. or not, as it satisfies our mind, we are not disposed to extend the controversy any farther. In taking leave of this subject, however, we assure our worthy friend, that R. C. does not knowingly deal in "*sneers!*" especially in matters of religion; neither was any thing intended as such on "*pages 57 and 58*" of Kneeland's Lectures, but only a candid statement of what he conceives to be truth. ED.

BOOKS

On the subject of Universal Salvation, for Sale by the Editor, No 137, Chesnut street—where subscriptions will be received for the Messenger.

PHILADELPHIA HYMN BOOK, containing 731 Hymns, from Watts, Doddridge, Merrick, Scott, Barbauld, Steele, and others \$1

COLUMBIAN MISCELLANY. (a few copies,) containing among other things, *The Evidences of Christianity Considered: Or a short and easy Method with the Deists.*—An Interesting Fact, related by a traveller, translated from the French, respecting the *Inquisition*—Select Scriptures, on various subjects—Several Sermons—A course of Letters on the subject of Universal Salvation, to a Friend who had met with very ill treatment in consequence of embracing that Doctrine—Sacred Poetry—With various other Miscellaneous Subjects. 408 pages 12mo at the moderate price of 75 cents.

(Concluded in our next Number.)

PRINTED BY ADAM WALDIE,
BACK OF 74, SOUTH SECOND STREET.